1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
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albárka (lit. blessing), a gift meant to express the 'blessing' that lay on the land which the family received from the chief.

Another expression of the chief's control over the reapportionment of land is that all land of families or branches of families which have died out, and similarly the land of families who have emigrated, falls back to the common fund of land reserve administered by the chief. The period within which the land of emigrants still remains theirs is fixed everywhere in Nupe as three years. After that time the chief is entitled to reapportion the land. Should an heir from the emigrated group return after a longer period, he could (like any other stranger) claim land in the village, but not as a rule the same land that his family had held previously. The dying-out of a family, or a branch of a family, seems a fact not easy to establish and always open to doubts in a social system in which small sections repeatedly split off the main body of the family. There is always the chance of an unexpected or belated claimant turning up, representing a distant branch which chief and elders may no longer have reckoned as likely to identify itself with the original family. But this is mainly a theoretical speculation; there occur few such cases in Nupe —none in Trans-Kaduna, where land is plentiful and vacated plots unlikely to be much competed for.

In Cis-Kaduna I witnessed an interesting case of this kind. A family head in Doko had died, leaving a small boy, who was then adopted by a childless brother of the deceased, living in a *tunga* on a farm of his own. The boy grew up on this farm and lived there contentedly until recently, after more than twenty years, the chief reapportioned the apparently unclaimed land that had belonged to the boy's father to two elders of high rank, the *Lile* and *Shabà* (both of the chief's family). Not until then did the young man return to Doko and make a formal claim for his ancestral land. But political motives rather than economic interest were behind this move; the parties in this case were, again, the chief of Doko and young Ndakó Gana, the 'dispossessed' descendant of the line of original chiefs. The chief had reapportioned the land in order to blot out the last visible connexion between the 'pretender's' family and the chieftainship of Doko; and the young man disputed the reapportionment on these very grounds. In the end he received back some of the original land and other new land in addition.

Here we discover a new significance in the apportionment of village land—its connexion with the bestowal of rank or office. This is not surprising in the communities (such as Doko) where the village ranks, like the land, remain in the possession of one 'house'. Later, we shall see more clearly, in the discussion of inheritance, that the Nupe kinship system tends indeed to couple attainment of family headship (which goes with rank) with inheritance of ancestral land. Considering, however, that the ordinary village land does not differ widely in quality and productive value, we can understand that this political aspect of land ownership is rather obscure—save in a case such as the one just quoted where political aspirations have attached to a specific property more than its proper share of symbolic significance. The political aspect becomes more prominent in connexion with a natural resource that shows this